

**To: Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel**  
**Subject: Violence Against Women and Girls Inquiry - update**  
**Date: 16 June 2022**

**Introduction:**

1. On 10 December 2020, the Government launched a 10 week call for evidence on violence against women and girls (VAWG) to inform a new national strategy. Following the tragic murder of Sarah Everard, the national call for evidence was re-opened for a further two weeks.
2. Building on the 2016-2020 strategy, the Government's refreshed '[Tackling violence against women and girls](#)' strategy was published on 21 July 2021 with specific policy commitments.
3. The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) launched his own inquiry on Wednesday 4 August, with the aim of understanding the extent to which such crimes are being committed and what more can be done to prevent and tackle them.
4. The PCC's Inquiry focuses on four overarching themes:
  - Prevention
  - Engagement
  - The Victim's Journey
  - RehabilitationAnd the following sub-themes:
  - What victims tell us
  - What the data tells us on crime
  - Criminal Justice outcomes
  - Support for victims (commissioned services)
  - Learning and best practice recommendations
5. Further to the report presented at the December 2021 Panel meeting, this paper provides an update on the PCC's VAWG Inquiry.

**Activity:**

VAWG Survey

6. From 31 August to 19 November 2021, the PCC ran a survey to:
  - find out the extent of violence and abuse being perpetrated against women and girls in Kent, including online; and
  - understand how safe women and girls felt in different aspects of their lives.
7. In total, 8,263 responses were received, an unprecedented number for a survey launched by the PCC and evidence of the strength of public feeling. The survey was open to anyone over the age of 16 and just over 93% of responses were from women and 3.5% from men.
8. The data has been analysed and the [full survey report](#) can be found on the OPCC website; a copy was also circulated to Members at the beginning of February.
9. The survey asked about feelings of safety in different private and public areas. By way of example, the charts labelled A and B at the end of this report show feelings of safety at night and during the day 'in the street you live' and 'in your local town centre' by age group.

10. Radar charts were also created to help identify those districts where people felt the safest and least safe; an example is labelled C at the end of this report.
11. The survey data has also been used to help the OPCC identify those Districts to approach in terms of submitting bids into the Home Office's VAWG focused Safer Streets Fund. To date, funded activity has included street scene and physical interventions to improve feelings of safety, CCTV and lighting, signposting events, establishment of safe spaces and active bystander training.

#### Offender data

12. Ten years of Kent Police VAWG offender data has been analysed and presented to the PCC and Chief Officers to provide insight into the perpetrators of such offences and inform local strategies.

#### Victim data

13. Whilst there were some initial delays to ensure data protection safeguards were in place, ten years of VAWG victim data has also been collected and will be analysed imminently. The findings will be shared with Kent Police to offer further insight into how the Force and the OPCC can better support victims.

#### Roundtables

14. To understand the great work being done by all Districts, the PCC has hosted a number of stakeholder roundtable events. Notable examples of activity captured at the events include Community Safety Partnerships creating safe spaces in town centres; the utilisation of technology, such as the Holly Guard app; providing safety training for women and girls; and improving CCTV.
15. The roundtables have also included representation from the British Transport Police to gain a better understanding of how residents and visitors are being kept safe on the railways.

#### Victim Panel focus group

16. On 24 May, the PCC hosted the initial Victim Panel focus group for those with lived experience of VAWG.
17. The OPCC worked with relevant charities to identify victims who were agreeable to taking part, and also developed the Terms of Reference in collaboration to ensure their needs and preferences were reflected in its organisation.
18. The aim of the focus group is to create a feedback loop in how support services and Kent Police can improve, but equally to identify where they are getting it right.
19. The initial focus group was a great success, with each victim speaking forcefully about their experiences. Some of the issues raised included a lack of communication from both the police and the CPS (if they were lucky enough for their case to proceed); a perception that the burden of proof fell on them; and a feeling of almost being as traumatised by the criminal justice system as by the events themselves.
20. Valuable feedback will be provided to Kent Police and the wider criminal justice system through the PCC's role as Chair of the Kent Criminal Justice Board. The PCC will also consider what further action his office can take to support victims and ensure they receive the best possible service.
21. In the future the PCC will consult the focus group on new proposals to tackle VAWG, commissioning strategies, education programmes and to further explore the service provided by criminal justice agencies.

#### **Impact:**

22. The PCC has been encouraged by the number of written statements of support from various councils in Kent to his Inquiry. He would like to express his thanks as the Inquiry will only succeed with multi-agency support.

23. Whilst tackling offences against women and girls has been a Kent Police priority for a number of years, as a direct response to the launch of the PCC's Inquiry, the Force has introduced a new VAWG Strategy. The strategy has five key strands:
- Holding offenders to account – criminal justice, offender management, training and development
  - Supporting victims – service provision, practice review, engagement and safeguarding
  - Keeping people safe – education, early intervention, problem solving and crime prevention
  - Our culture – educating, encouraging, empowering
  - Strengthening the system – governance, scrutiny, technology and partnerships
24. As a result of the PCC's survey findings and feedback from their own series of public engagement events, Kent Police has reviewed where police patrols are carried out to increase visibility in those areas where women and girls feel unsafe, and not just where crimes were previously recorded.
25. A meeting has been held between the OPCC and the Kent Police strategic lead for VAWG to understand how the PCC's Inquiry can complement the work of the Force and to prevent any duplication.

**Next steps:**

26. The Inquiry Report will be published in the next few weeks. As well as a Foreword by the PCC, it will explain the context of the Inquiry and governance, provide highlights from the PCC's survey and 'big data' exercises, and outline the actions already taken, recommendations and next steps. It will be widely publicised and the PCC will ensure that Panel members receive a copy.
27. It is the intention of the PCC for the report to be a living document; a platform to work from in order to improve women and girls' physical safety and feelings of safety.
28. The coordination of all activity under the VAWG umbrella will be managed by a coordinator within the OPCC to promote closer working between Kent Police, charities and criminal justice agencies.
29. As Members will be aware, VAWG is a priority in the PCC's new [Making Kent Safer](#) Plan. As such, the Chief Constable will be required to provide regular updates on Force activity and outcomes at the PCC's quarterly [Performance and Delivery Board](#).
30. The PCC acknowledges that VAWG is one of the challenges of our time and that as a society, there is a need to come together to address it. He wants to ensure offenders are brought to justice and improve the journey for victims and survivors. That is why the PCC will continue to update the Police and Crime Panel on his Inquiry work even after the report has been published to lay out how Kent Police and the OPCC are working towards tackling VAWG in all its guises.
31. In Kent there is already a lot of good work going on, from Kent Police to that provided by partners and commissioned charitable services, but the PCC recognises that there is a continued need to pull together in order to make a difference and make things better.

**Recommendation:**

32. The Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel is asked to note this report and agree to a further update at their December 2022 meeting.

Please note: 1 = very unsafe / 10 = very safe

Chart A

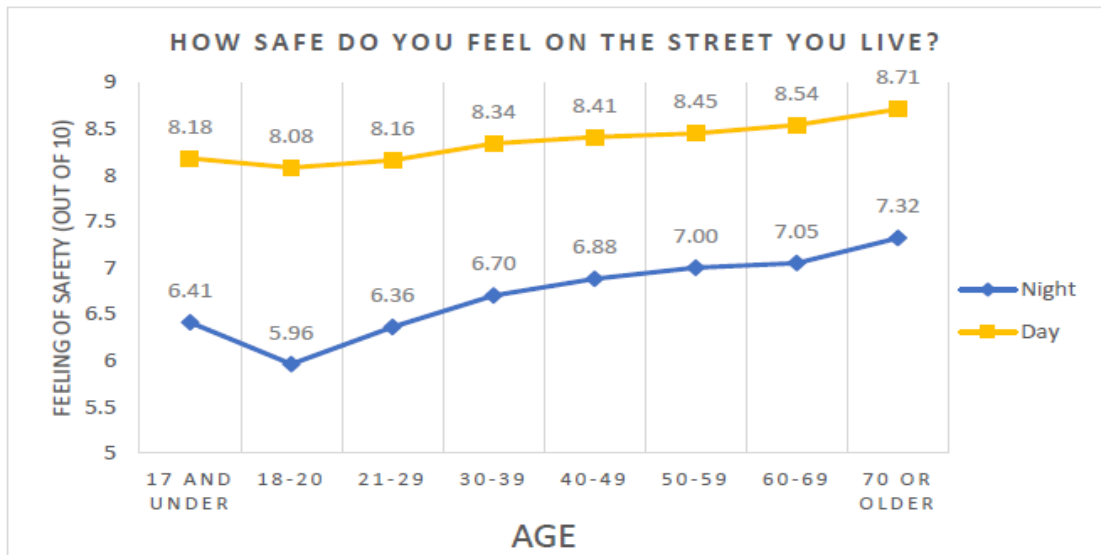


Chart B

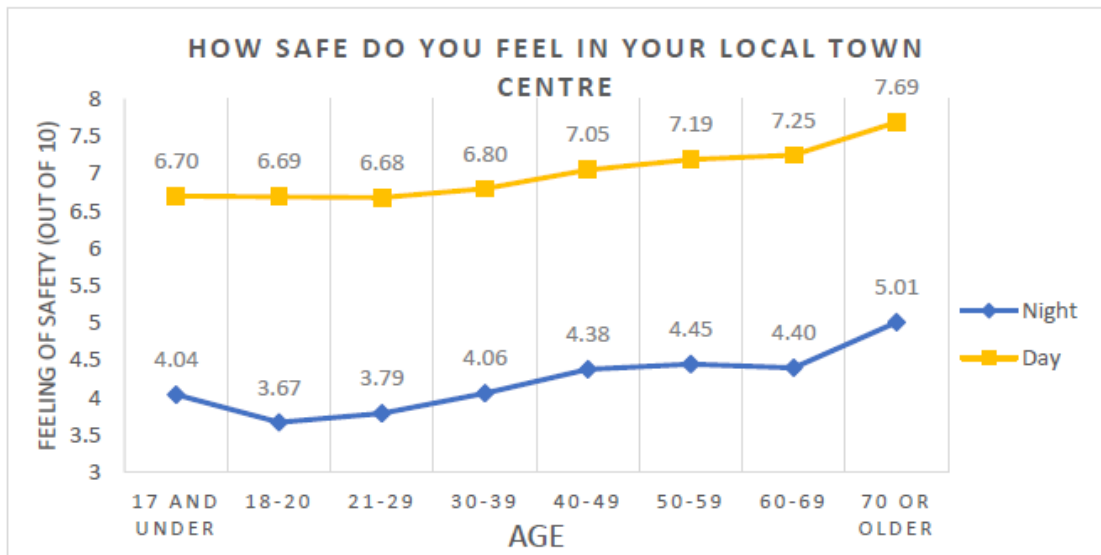


Chart C

